

# **Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report December 2004 to March 2005**

## **I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:**

### Surveillance

- Animal identification initiatives – In January, APHIS launched a national animal identification website. The website is designed to be a one-stop resource to facts about the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). States and tribes are increasingly offering online premises registration to participants (37 states and 5 tribes as of March 2005). Contact information for these state and tribal animal health authorities is provided on the APHIS NAIS website (<http://www.usda.gov/nais>). Safeguarding Review recommendation #128 calls for the development of a comprehensive animal identification system which takes into consideration state and regional animal production methods.
- Comprehensive surveillance for swine diseases – VS personnel attended meetings with the Swine Health Committee of the National Pork Board in March to demonstrate a tool used to design and develop the comprehensive classical swine fever surveillance plan. Application of the tool to develop a comprehensive surveillance plan for pseudorabies and other swine diseases was discussed. Creating a comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated approach to surveillance which includes consultation with stakeholders was a key message in the animal health safeguarding review.

### Exclusion

- Biosecurity video – In March, VS began offering a free 15 minute video on preventing exotic Newcastle disease and avian influenza for small flock poultry owners and bird fanciers. The video is part of the USDA's *Biosecurity for the Birds* program which was started after the END outbreak in California and other western states in 2002 and 2003. Improving biosecurity practices amongst producers is consistent with the safeguarding review.
- Assistance to the Dominican Republic – VS Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory personnel met in January with personnel from the Dominican Republic Ministry of Agriculture and APHIS International Services. Future collaborations, with a focus on classical swine fever, were discussed. Also in attendance at the meeting were private swine producers and consultants from the Dominican Republic and representatives from the US State Department. Safeguarding Review recommendation #10 supports expanded participation in international animal health discussions and activities.

- Assistance to Mexico – VS personnel provided a Basic Brucellosis Epidemiology training course to approximately 50 Mexican state and federal veterinarians and laboratory personnel. The course was held in Mexico in December. Safeguarding Review recommendation #10 supports expanded participation in international animal health discussions and activities.

#### Laboratory Systems

- Validation of rapid tests – VS continues work to validate rapid tests developed for various foreign animal diseases. In February, VS personnel met with representatives of the Bolivian government and others to discuss a collaborative project to obtain samples to be used to validate the real-time PCR assays and other diagnostic tests for classical swine fever and foot and mouth disease. Several safeguarding recommendations addressed the need for applied research to support surveillance and response activities (#s137 and 138).
- Ames Modernization – In December, the second National Centers for Animal Health building was completed. The National Centers for Animal Health includes the National Veterinary Services Laboratories, the Center for Veterinary Biologics, and the National Animal Disease Center. This new building will house the training barn which is used for a variety of animal disease training courses. The Ames Modernization project was supported in safeguarding review recommendation #94.
- Connecting Laboratories – VS National Animal Health Laboratory Network personnel attended a meeting in December with representatives from the Laboratory Response Network, the Food Emergency Response Network and the Centers for Disease Control. The meeting focused on ways in which relationships could be strengthened in the areas of testing, surveillance, and response to disease events. Working groups on surveillance and laboratory issues were formed to improve collaboration. Several safeguarding review recommendations point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system (#s 17, 74, and 121).

#### Response

- Poultry foreign animal disease awareness – In March, a Poultry Foreign Animal Disease Awareness Training Course was held. Sixty-one federal, state, industry, and foreign veterinarians participated in the course. Along with providing information about poultry diseases, the course also focused on identifying a network of poultry veterinarians who could be called upon in case of a disease emergency. Safeguarding Review recommendation #113 calls for extending foreign animal disease training opportunities to state, university, industry, and private practitioners.
- North American animal disease exercise – In March, VS joined Canada in an exercise which focused on US and Canadian border operations in response to a foot and mouth disease outbreak. The exercise, Equinox 2005, was the third in a series of North

American exercises. Holding regular foreign animal disease exercises will foster better disease response as called for in the safeguarding review.

- Veterinary stockpile – VS is collaborating with the Agricultural Research Service and Department of Defense on establishing a veterinary stockpile. Initial efforts have focused on developing outbreak scenario models; evaluating vaccines, supplies, and equipment for countermeasures; and providing economic analysis of factors contributing to the stockpile. A National Veterinary Stockpile steering committee has been formed and has held several meetings. Safeguarding review recommendations #112 and 116 call for developing vaccination strategies and providing supplies to implement the strategy.
- State level emergency response activities – VS personnel continue to participate in state and local emergency management preparedness activities. VS personnel are assisting states in updating preparedness plans, developing and conducting tabletop exercises, and distributing educational materials. Safeguarding review recommendations #117 supports continued cooperative efforts between APHIS and states.
- Reagents initiative – VS personnel are participating in the Veterinary Immunological Reagents Initiative, a cooperative effort with university researchers and the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service. A pilot project has been initiated to develop two reagents which can be used to support ARS and APHIS research priorities for products with potential application in animal health control and eradication programs.

## **II. Implementation activities:**

Twenty-four action plans addressing safeguarding review recommendations were submitted to the Veterinary Services Management Team in January 2005. Most of these action plans were approved, additional information was requested for a few of the action items.

Approval of these twenty-four action plans brings to a conclusion the work of five of the Safeguarding Issue Groups (Coordinated Response, Information Technology, Laboratory Systems, National Surveillance System, and Organizational Dynamics).

The Exclusion Issue Group continues to meet and hold conference calls as it works to finalize its action plans.

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